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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAKU 000719

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/07/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IR](#) [RU](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: IRAN REPORTEDLY NOT CONCERNED OVER POSSIBLE JOINT
RUSSIA-U.S. RADAR

Classified By: Charge Donald Lu for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) In a June 8 press statement, Iranian Embassy press spokesman in Baku Majid Feyzullahi said that Tehran does not have any concerns about Russia's proposal to make its Qabala radar station available for joint use with the U.S. Feyzullahi added that "we have no concerns because the issue is Azerbaijan's internal affair."

¶2. (C) Although covered by the Azerbaijani media, most initial press reporting focused solely on the U.S.-Russia dimension of the story, with no consideration given to possible Iranian reactions or implications for Azerbaijani-Iranian relations. The story generated surprisingly little reaction among Embassy Baku Iran contacts, and was picked up by only one Azeri diaspora website. The story was not featured on Iranian English-language websites to include BAZTAB, Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), or the Iranian Student's News Agency (ISNA).

¶3. (C) Comment: The initial Iranian reaction to this announcement is somewhat puzzling given the fact that Iran rarely misses an opportunity to criticize U.S. financial support for Azerbaijan's short-range surface radar located in Astara (funded by the U.S. EXBS program) as "offensive" or "threatening." Given publicly-stated U.S. concerns about the Iranian ballistic missile program and interest in developing an anti-ballistic missile system, it is difficult to understand why the Iranians would not also consider the Qabala radar as an "offensive" or "threatening" capability. We suspect Iran's public stance will change. End Comment.
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